

CM/ECF Basics

October 2002

Case Management

CM / ECF

Electronic Case Files

Overview:

CM/ECF is the new electronic case management and electronic case files system for the federal courts. It provides federal courts enhanced and updated docket management. It allows courts to maintain case documents in electronic form. It gives each court the option of permitting case documents -- pleadings, motions, petitions -- to be filed with the court over the Internet.

In May of 2002, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims was selected by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to convert to the CM/ECF system. CM stands for Case Management and ECF stands for Electronic Case Files. The CM portion of this system allows the court to manage it's docket using a modern and easy to use system. ECF allows the court and attorneys to file documents in their cases via the internet.

CM/ECF implementation in the bankruptcy courts has been underway since early 2001. District court implementation is just beginning and appellate court implementation will begin in 2003.

Electronic Access:

A key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides unprecedented access to up-to-the-second docket sheets as well as to the documents themselves over the Internet through the Court's electronic filing web site.

Electronic Filing:

Another key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it accepts documents filed electronically over the Internet. While it is not necessary that documents be filed electronically to have them entered into the CM/ECF system, electronic filing is strongly encouraged by the Court.

Electronic Noticing:

A third key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides immediate e-mail notices to all counsel involved in a case whenever a document is filed. To receive electronic notice of filings, attorneys must be registered to file electronically and must have the e-mail noticing feature of their Court account turned on.

Fees:

There is no cost to court personnel to use CM/ECF. Electronic access to court data by the public is available through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) program.

Attorneys and litigants receive one free copy of documents filed electronically in their cases; additional copies are available for viewing or downloading at seven cents per page. Directed by

Congress to fund electronic access through user fees, the judiciary has set the fee at the lowest possible level sufficient to recoup program costs.

Attorney Registration:

In order to file documents electronically and to receive e-mail notices of documents that are filed, attorneys must be admitted to practice before the Court and must be registered to file electronically. Upon registration, attorneys will be provided with an identification name and password that will allow access to the system. The identification name and password will also serve as the attorney's signature for all documents that are filed electronically.

Technical Requirements:

Filers will need the following hardware and software to file documents in the CM/ECF electronic filing system:

- A personal computer running a standard platform such as Windows or Macintosh.
- A PDF-compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows-based versions of WordPerfect or Word.
- Internet service.
- Netscape Navigator version 4.6 or 4.7. (Netscape 6 is not recommended for use with CM/ECF.) The new versions of the CM/ECF system have been certified to be compatible with Internet Explorer 5.5.
- Software to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF). Adobe Acrobat PDF Writer is recommended. Acrobat Writer Version 3.X, 4.X and 5.0 adequately meet the CM/ECF filing requirements.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available for free, is needed for viewing PDF documents.
- A scanner may be necessary to create electronic images of documents that are not in your word processing system.